

What is claimed is:

1. An information retrieval method, comprising:
 - prompting a user to input an initial query and receiving the initial query input by the user, wherein the initial query includes a keyword;
 - determining a synonym of the keyword;
 - determining a term related to the keyword;
 - creating a first query, wherein the first query (a) includes the keyword, the synonym, and/or the related term and (b) conforms to the query protocol of a first search engine;
 - creating a second query, wherein the second query (a) includes the keyword, the synonym, and/or the related term and (b) conforms to the query protocol of a second search engine;
 - submitting to the first search engine the first query;
 - submitting to the second search engine the second query;
 - receiving from the first search engine a first plurality of document identifiers;
 - receiving from the second search engine a second plurality of document identifies; and
 - for one or more document identifier included in the first plurality of document identifiers and for one or more document identifier included in the second plurality of document identifiers, determining a score

for the document identified by the document identifier,

wherein the step of determining the score includes the step of identifying a figure legend within the document, and

wherein the document's score is, at the least, a function of whether the keyword, synonym and/or related word is found in the identified figure legend.

2. The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of enabling the user to select the synonym, wherein, if the user selects the synonym, then the first query includes both the keyword and synonym.

3. The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of enabling the user to select the related term, wherein, if the user selects the related term, then the first query includes both the keyword and related term.

4. The method of claim 1, wherein the first query include the keyword but not the synonym or related term.

5. The method of claim 4, further comprising the steps of:

creating a third query, wherein the third query (a) includes the synonym, but not the related term or

the keyword and (b) conforms to the query protocol of a first search engine;

submitting to the first search engine the third query; and

receiving from the first search engine a third plurality of document identifiers.

6. The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of enabling the user to assign a weight value to the synonym, the related term and/or the keyword.

7. The method of claim 1, wherein the step of determining the synonym includes the step of searching for the keyword within a knowledge pack.

8. The method of claim 1, wherein the step of determining a score for a document includes the step of determining the number of times the keyword appears in an abstract of the document and determining the number of times the keyword appears in a main body of the document.

9. The method of claim 8, wherein the step of determining the number of times the keyword appears in the abstract of the document includes the step of accessing a document database that stores statistical information about the document, including the number of times a word in a knowledge pack appears in the document's abstract and main body.

10. The method of claim 8, wherein the step of determining the number of times the keyword appears in the abstract of the document includes the steps of:

retrieving the document after submitting the queries to the search engines; and

parsing the document after retrieving the document.

11. An information retrieval system, comprising:
means for prompting a user to input an initial query;

means for receiving the initial query input by the user, wherein the initial query includes a keyword;

means for determining a synonym of the keyword;

means for determining a term related to the keyword;

means for creating a first query, wherein the first query (a) includes the keyword, the synonym, and/or the related term and (b) conforms to the query protocol of a first search engine;

means for creating a second query, wherein the second query (a) includes the keyword, the synonym, and/or the related term and (b) conforms to the query protocol of a second search engine;

means for submitting to the first search engine the first query;

means for submitting to the second search engine the second query;

means for receiving from the first search engine a first plurality of document identifiers;

means for receiving from the second search engine a second plurality of document identifies; and

scoring means for determining a score for a document identified by a document identifier from the first or second plurality of document identifiers, the scoring means including means for identifying a figure legend within the document, wherein the document's score is, at the least, a function of whether the keyword, synonym and/or related word is found in the identified figure legend.

12. The system of claim 11, further comprising means for enabling the user to select the synonym, wherein, if the user selects the synonym, then the first query includes both the keyword and synonym.

13. The system of claim 11, further comprising means for enabling the user to select the related term, wherein, if the user selects the related term, then the first query includes both the keyword and related term.

14. The system of claim 11, wherein the first query include the keyword but not the synonym or related term.

15. The system of claim 14, further comprising:
means for creating a third query, wherein the
third query (a) includes the synonym, but not the
related term or the keyword and (b) conforms to the
query protocol of a first search engine;
means for submitting to the first search engine
the third query; and
means for receiving from the first search engine
a third plurality of document identifiers.

16. The system of claim 11, further comprising
means for enabling the user to assign a weight value
to the synonym, the related term and/or the keyword.

17. The system of claim 11, wherein the means
for determining the synonym includes means for
searching for the keyword within a knowledge pack.

18. The system of claim 11, wherein the scoring
means includes means for determining the number of
times the keyword appears in an abstract of the
document and mean for determining the number of times
the keyword appears in a main body of the document.

19. The system of claim 18, wherein the means
for determining the number of times the keyword
appears in the abstract of the document includes means
for accessing a document database that stores

statistical information about the document, including the number of times a word in a knowledge pack appears in the document's abstract and main body.

20. The system of claim 18, wherein the means for determining the number of times the keyword appears in the abstract of the document includes:

means retrieving the document after submitting the queries to the search engines; and
means for parsing the document after retrieving the document.

21. A computer program embodied on a computer readable medium, the computer program comprising:

a computer code segment for prompting a user to input an initial query;

a computer code segment for receiving the initial query input by the user, wherein the initial query includes a keyword;

a computer code segment for determining a synonym of the keyword;

a computer code segment for determining a term related to the keyword;

a computer code segment for creating a first query, wherein the first query (a) includes the keyword, the synonym, and/or the related term and (b) conforms to the query protocol of a first search engine;

a computer code segment for creating a second query, wherein the second query (a) includes the keyword, the synonym, and/or the related term and (b) conforms to the query protocol of a second search engine;

a computer code segment for submitting to the first search engine the first query;

a computer code segment for submitting to the second search engine the second query;

a computer code segment for receiving from the first search engine a first plurality of document identifiers;

a computer code segment for receiving from the second search engine a second plurality of document identifies; and

a computer code segment for determining a score for a document identified by a document identifier from the first or second plurality of document identifiers, said computer code segment including code for identifying a figure legend within the document, wherein the document's score is, at the least, a function of whether the keyword, synonym and/or related word is found in the identified figure legend.

22. The system of claim 21, further comprising a computer code segment for enabling the user to select the synonym, wherein, if the user selects the synonym, then the first query includes both the keyword and synonym.

23. The system of claim 21, further comprising a computer code segment for enabling the user to select the related term, wherein, if the user selects the related term, then the first query includes both the keyword and related term.

24. The system of claim 21, wherein the first query includes the keyword but not the synonym or related term.

25. The system of claim 24, further comprising:
a computer code segment for creating a third query, wherein the third query (a) includes the synonym, but not the related term or the keyword and (b) conforms to the query protocol of a first search engine;

a computer code segment for submitting to the first search engine the third query; and

a computer code segment for receiving from the first search engine a third plurality of document identifiers.

26. The system of claim 21, further comprising a computer code segment for enabling the user to assign a weight value to the synonym, the related term and/or the keyword.

27. The system of claim 21, wherein the computer code segment for determining the synonym includes code for searching for the keyword within a knowledge pack.

28. The system of claim 21, wherein the computer code segment for determining a score for the document includes code for determining the number of times the keyword appears in an abstract of the document and code for determining the number of times the keyword appears in a main body of the document.

29. The system of claim 28, wherein the code for determining the number of times the keyword appears in the abstract of the document includes code for accessing a document database that stores statistical information about the document, including the number of times a word in a knowledge pack appears in the document's abstract and main body.

30. The system of claim 28, wherein the code for determining the number of times the keyword appears in the abstract of the document includes:

a computer code segment for retrieving the document after submitting the queries to the search engines; and

a computer code segment for parsing the document after retrieving the document.